

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY CANBERRA

INFO AMCONSUL MELBOURNE

AMCONSUL SYDNEY

AMCONSUL PERTH

AMCONSUL BRISBANE

AMCONSUL PORT MORESBY

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 165559

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS:PINT, AS, ELAB

SUBJECT: DISCUSSION WITH ALP PRESIDENT ROBERT J. HAWKE

1. ALP PRESIDENT ROBERT J. HAWKE TOLD EA LABOR ADVISOR, IN DISCUSSION AT LATTER'S RESIDENCE ON NIGHT OF JULY 25, THAT HE HAS SUPPORT OF BOTH PRIME MINISTER WHITLAM AND DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER CAIRNS FOR ANY MOVE HE MIGHT WISH TO MAKE TO SUCCEED WHITLAM IF AND WHEN WHITLAM DECIDES TO RETIRE. HAWKE OPINED THAT THIS WOULD HAPPEN FOLLOWING NEXT GENERAL ELECTION, WHICH HE SPECULATED WOULD BE HELD BEFORE END OF NEXT YEAR.

2. HAWKE THEN GOT INTO HIS RELATIONS WITH CAIRNS AND HOW CORDIAL THEY WERE. HE REFERRED TO MEETING HE HAD HAD WITH
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CAIRNS JUST PRIOR TO HIS DEPARTURE FOR LONDON TO ATTEND THE

DUKE OF EDINBURGH CONFERENCE, AT WHICH CAIRNS PROMISED TO TEST THE WATER BY TOUCHING BASE WITH ALP ADHERENTS WHO SYMPATHIZE WITH CAIRN'S IDEOLOGICAL BENT TO SOUND THEM OUT ON HAWKE'S CANDIDACY. ACCORDING TO HAWKE, CAIRNS WILL REPORT THE OUTCOME TO HIM UPON HAWKE'S RETURN FROM CURRENT VISIT TO THE UNITED STATES.

3. HAWKE MADE SIMILAR STATEMENT REGARDING HIS RELATIONS WITH WHITLAM. HE SAID THAT THERE WAS A PERIOD WHEN RELATIONS WERE STRAINED BUT NOW BOTH ARE ON SAME WAVE LENGTH.

HE EVIDENCED THIS BY RECOUNTING RECENT DISCUSSION HE HAD WITH WHITLAM, DURING WHICH WHITLAM NOT ONLY PROMISED SUPPORT IF HAWKE DECIDED TO VIE FOR PRIME MINISTER'S POSITION BUT WOULD MAKE THIS SUPPORT KNOWN TO PEOPLE WITHIN THE ALP WHO HAVE BEEN IDENTIFIED WITH THE WHITLAM FORCES FOR A NUMBER OF YEARS.

4. IN RESPONSE TO A DIRECT QUESTION ABOUT WHAT HE WOULD DO IF THE OPPORTUNITY WERE TO PRESENT ITSELF, HAWKE SAID HE WOULD HAVE TO MAKE THAT DECISION ON THE BASIS OF WHETHER OR NOT HE HAD SUFFICIENT "GUTS" TO FULFILL WHAT HE CALLED "AN AWESOME RESPONSIBILITY". HAWKE ALSO SAID THAT HE WOULD BE REQUIRED TO CHANGE HIS LIVING HABITS, INCLUDING DRINKING, FOR WHICH HE IS RENOWNED IN AUSTRALIAN PUB CIRCLES, IF HE BECAME PRIME MINISTER. ON THE QUESTION OF DRINKING, HAWKE MADE IT CLEAR THAT HE LIKES "GROG" AND THAT IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT INDEED FOR HIM TO TURN THE TAP OFF COMPLETELY. HOWEVER, IF THE PARTY HAD ENOUGH FAITH IN HIM TO HONOR HIM WITH THE POSITION, HE WOULD ADOPT A NEW PUBLIC IMAGE.

5. HAWKE'S WIFE, WHO WAS PRESENT THROUGH THE DISCUSSION, SUGGESTED TO HAWKE THAT HE GIVE SOME CONSIDERATION TO THE PROBLEMS THAT SHE WOULD FACE AS THE WIFE OF A PRIME MINISTER. SHE SAID THAT SHE IS NOT KEEN ON THE IDEA OF BEING THRUST INTO THE SPOTLIGHT AS THE WIFE OF AUSTRALIA'S NUMBER ONE PUBLIC OFFICIAL AND WOULD PREFER TO REMAIN A SIMPLE HOUSEWIFE. AFTER A SHORT EXCHANGE WITH HER HUSBAND, MRS. HAWKE INDICATED THAT SHE WOULD DO WHAT SHE

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ALWAYS HAD DONE: BOW TO HIS WISHES.

6. FINALLY, HAWKE SAID THAT HIS DECISION WILL BE CLEAR FROM WHETHER HE STANDS FOR THE MELBOURNE PORT SEAT NOW HELD BY FRANK CREAN. SINCE HAWKE DOES NOT INTEND TO RUN FOR PARLIAMENT UNLESS HE INTENDS TO SEEK THE TOP NATIONAL OFFICE, HIS ULTIMATE INTENTIONS WILL BE CLEAR FROM WHETHER HE STANDS FOR SUCH A "SAFE" SEAT. KISSINGER

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